

oward an

AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY LABOR MOVEMENT

statement of
programmatic orientation by
THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

PRICE 15 CENTS

TOWARD AN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY LABOR MOVEMENT

Statement of
Programmatic Orientation by the
AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

New York, 1934

Published by
The Provisional Organizing Committee
of The American Workers Party.
Room 702, 112 E. 19th St.
New York City

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
CHAPTER I THE DECLINE OF CAPITALISM.....	5
The Nature of the Crisis	
The Attempts to Save Capitalism	
Fascism	
War	
The Central Contradictions and Its Solution	
CHAPTER II THE AIM OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY	10
The Common Objective of All Political Parties	
The Nature of Capitalist Dictatorship	
How the Capitalist Dictatorship Maintains Popular Support	
The Specific Aims of a Revolutionary Party	
The Defense of the Workers State	
The New Political Form of Society	
Socialization	
World-Socialism	
CHAPTER III THE INADEQUACIES OF EXISTING PARTIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE....	18
The Socialist Labor Party	
The Socialist Party	
The Communist Party	
Farmer-Labor and Reform Movements	
The Party's International Outlook	
CHAPTER IV THE ORIGIN IN ACTION OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY	30
CHAPTER V HOW THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY WILL FIGHT FOR POWER	37
The Main Line of Party Strategy	
The Winning of Mass Organizations	
The Fight Against War	
Participation in Elections	
THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION	46

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

FOREWORD

FOUR and a half years of depression have been teaching the people of this country that something is basically wrong with the present system. History itself is driving home the utter senselessness of unemployment, hunger, and misery existing side by side with the most marvelous industrial and agricultural productive plant yet built by man, a plant adequate to fulfill every normal need of every citizen of the country. Every day is demonstrating more clearly the incompetence of our present leaders to solve our problems. Many persons are beginning to realize that this incompetence is not due merely to the stupidity or corruption of individual leaders of industry and the government, but that the system itself cannot work properly any longer, whoever is in charge. These persons are beginning to understand that the present system of society must itself be done away with and a new system substituted—that we must have not merely honest men, vigorous reforms and new deals, but a revolutionary change in the whole structure of society.

Such persons, however, have not always clearly formulated the exact nature of the required change. And, even if they have done so, they do not know what group or party to support in order to help bring the change about.

The American Workers Party claims to know the nature of the revolutionary change that alone can save our society from continuing and increasing disintegration. The American Workers Party claims, further, that with the support of the workers of this country it will be able to lead correctly in the movement to

542018

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

bring about this change, and to establish a free workers' democracy guaranteeing peace, security, and the opportunity of individual development for all.

The purpose of the present pamphlet is to outline roughly the aims, principles, and proposed methods of the American Workers Party. It will be followed by a series of pamphlets and articles analyzing specific problems in greater detail.

The failure of the revolutionary movement in the United States to develop effectively up to the present time is clear to everyone. The justification of the claim of the American Workers Party to lead the revolutionary movement to victory cannot, of course, be demonstrated in pamphlets and articles; it will be proved in action. The only assurance that the American Workers Party will lead, and will lead correctly to the final goal, will be the determined union of the advanced workers and producers of the United States in its ranks. We call upon all workers, upon all who are no longer willing to suffer needless injustice, who have decided not merely to complain at but to change society, we call upon all the forces determined to bring a new social order out of the ruins of the old, to unite.

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

Chapter I

THE DECLINE OF CAPITALISM

The Nature of the Crisis

The present crisis, which is dated in this country from 1929, marks much more than a usual depression or dip in the business cycle. It must be regarded as the beginning of the end of the present form of society, as the period of the increasingly rapid decline of the capitalist system. Indeed, the American crisis is only one phase of the world crisis, which started in Europe some years earlier, developing unevenly in the various countries because of a variety of internal peculiarities: first in England, Germany, and Austria, then spreading, to include Italy, Belgium, France, and the whole of continental Europe with the exception of the Soviet Union. Even before this, the Russian Revolution, and in fact the World War itself, were unmistakable signs that the era of capitalism was closing.

The decline of capitalism may not necessarily be a steady slide down. It will be marked by great variations, by differences in different countries, by temporary pick-ups, by paths, false starts, and new and old deals. But if it is possible and even probable that a semblance of prosperity may return here and there, for a short period, it is certain that such prosperity will be followed by ever more intensified crises, by ever increasing turmoil and chaos throughout the whole social and economic order. Even the temporary semblance of prosperity will be seen to be more and more specious—a capitalist prosperity guaran-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

teeing a certain measure of profits to banks and big business, but leaving outside larger and larger sections of the population, and, in good times and bad, steadily driving down the general standard of living.

The Attempts to Save Capitalism

More and more frantic efforts are being and will continue to be made to preserve the structure of the capitalist state and capitalist society. We are in the midst of the first important effort of this kind. The NRA together with the rest of the Roosevelt New Deal, making use of Federal credit and demagogic maneuvers, has unquestionably brought certain temporary benefits to certain sections of the population. But already the workers are beginning to see that the great part of the "government money" has gone to save corrupt banks and insurance companies, overcapitalized railroads, and monopolistic combines; and that whereas the profits of some of the largest industries have increased by hundreds of percent, the real wages of many workers have been driven below the Hoover depression level.

Even from the capitalist point of view, the New Deal is not working, and the opposition to it is more and more open from the conservatives as well as from the left. It will fail, and new schemes, new promises, will take its place. The precise form of these cannot be exactly anticipated. They will include a number of types of inflation, perhaps some variety of so-called "Social-Credit," probably a certain amount of "state socialism." Already members of the Administration have openly proposed unification and government control of all systems of communication, and government ownership and control of the railroads. These, and all other schemes and plans and deals, though they may have brief moments of hope, will in the end fail. They are bound to fail because capitalism itself is doomed. It has outgrown its possibilities of serving even approximately the needs of the great majority of men. It is an outworn tool, and it must be discarded.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Fascism

The most dangerous effort to save capitalism, the effort that is at present being made in Italy and Germany, is Fascism. As the disintegration of the system proceeds further in this country, the attempt to set up a Fascist government is almost certain to be made. The true character of fascism must be clearly understood: Fascism is, in practise, simply the violent and desperate attempt to save the capitalist state and capitalist property. This it sets out to do by abandoning all the forms of democracy, by an open terror against the revolutionary workers and a smashing of the independent workers' organizations, by the exploitation of the basest race chauvinism and nationalistic passion.

A fascist movement is not always easy to recognize, since it has a chameleon-like ability to adapt its form to the superficial passions and prejudices of each nation in which it raises its head. Thus the most dangerous fascist group in this country may very well not start as avowedly fascist, in the manner of the "Silver Shirts" or the "Friends of the New Germany"—though such organizations are now growing with alarming rapidity—but more likely in the disguise of a reform labor or pseudo-radical party, which only on thorough analysis will reveal fascist characteristics. It may be said in general that the extreme reactionary character of fascism always finds it necessary to mask behind seemingly radical phrases and slogans, in order to win the support of the masses.

It must further be noted that fascism may not take in this country the spectacular form it has taken in Italy and Germany, and may not make use of a *coup d'etat* to come to power. Fascism is not a new social system, in spite of the declarations of its apologists. Fascism is simply another, and so far the most frightful, form of capitalism. Conditions in this country—particularly the lack of development of a revolutionary labor movement—may make it possible to bring about what would properly be called fascism in an extremely peaceful way, observing legal and parliamentary forms. Measures that threaten to lead toward this—the more open alliance between industry and

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

banks and government, the imposition of Codes, the attempt to view the state as "umpire" in a collaboration between industry and labor, the effort through the American Federation of Labor to tie the labor movement to the capitalist state, the breaking of strikes and other *de facto* attacks on militant workers and their organizations—have already been taken by the Roosevelt Administration.

War

The period of the rapid decline of capitalism will almost certainly be marked by a series of the most appalling wars in history. There is no capitalist solution for the failure of a capitalist nation in its late stages to find sufficient effective markets for the goods it produces, and which its own population cannot purchase. The simultaneous presence in the world of six major capitalist powers, their simultaneous need for raw materials and for markets, will result in war—beginning in economic, tariff, exchange struggles, and later in war itself. Such wars have been taking, during the past sixteen years, and will continue to take, a variety of forms: wars of conquest, such as the Japanese war against China; wars between subject nations, inspired by the imperialist powers, such as the South American wars; wars among the imperialist powers themselves; and wars of intervention against the Soviet Union. A counter-force to imperialist struggle, itself inspired by capitalist exploitation, will be the wars of subject nations for independence, as in the case of the present revolt in Cuba.

The Central Contradiction and Its Solution

The general picture of the period of the decline of capitalism is of an insane, inchoate mass of bitter conflicts, meaningless wastes, irreconcilable contradictions. The central contradiction is unmistakably clear: it is the contradiction between a productive plant now physically capable of supplying amply all the basic needs of men, of freeing men forever from hunger, want, and insecurity, of enabling mankind as a whole thereby

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

to develop creatively as truly human beings—between this and a system of social relations that prevents this productive plant from operating effectively, that directs its operations not to the fulfillment of human needs but to the making of profits for private individuals and corporations. Out of this contradiction, and the irreconcilable class division it creates—the division between those who do and those who do not have an interest of ownership in the productive plant—flow the myriad other contradictions that devastate modern society. It is the struggle of the small owning group to maintain its position of privilege against the just and growingly insistent claims of the vast dispossessed majority that lies back of every major social evil.

If the central contradiction remains, the seemingly inevitable prospect for the immediate future is outlined in the foregoing paragraphs: crises of cumulative intensity, vain efforts at salvage, growing unemployment and impoverishment, hunger, fascism, war, increasing turmoil and chaos, until they end in the final disintegration not only of the capitalist system but perhaps of human society itself. This prospect can be altered only by the success of the revolutionary movement of the dispossessed majority, which will wipe out the central contradiction by taking the ownership and control of the productive plant out of the hands of individuals and placing that ownership and control in the hands of the workers and producers of society as a whole.

It is in the historical setting of this prospect that the American Workers Party will work to consolidate the forces capable of bringing about the new social order.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

The Nature of Capitalist Dictatorship

The belief of most Americans that we live in a free democratic society is an illusion. Such a belief must be an illusion in every capitalist society. A truly democratic society necessarily presupposes the economic and social equality of all the individuals composing it. The real and significant power in any society is held by those who own and control the means by which society lives—the means of the production and distribution of the goods which the members of society consume, or would like to consume. Since in our country this ownership and control is confined to a numerically insignificant minority (even capitalist spokesmen now admit that a few hundred men and their associates exercise the active control), it is this minority which actually holds power.

This power is exercised in many ways. The controlling minority decides the possibilities of work and the conditions of work; the homes in which we live and the terms under which we live in them; the factories that will be built and the quantity of goods they will turn out; the conditions for the issuing of government, state, and local securities, and thus the extent of relief and the rate of taxes; the wars to be fought and the wording of treaties; what most people wear, eat, even what they think. The power to invest capital in industry or withdraw it, to buy, sell and mortgage land, to merge, water and manipulate stock, to monopolize, store or destroy natural resources, to run the press, movies, radios, schools, and even the churches—this power is not merely economic, but political, social and cultural as well. Capitalist society, in which a small minority owns and controls the means of production, means and must mean capitalist dictatorship. The political forms of capitalist society (monarchy, democracy, military dictatorship, Fascism) are only the means by which, in a given historical situation, the actual dictatorship of the controlling minority expresses itself.

Our apparent political freedom, then, our freedom to vote for "the candidate of our choice," affects in no important way the question of who actually controls society and the state.

Chapter II

THE AIM OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

The Common Object of All Political Parties

THE aim of all political parties is the achievement and consolidation of state power. This must include working control of the apparatus of state: the armed forces, the bureaucracy, police, prisons, and courts. If the party is to continue long in power, it must also include the support or confidence of the major sections of the general population.

The nature of this aim is obscured in the United States by the fact that both major political parties, which together appear to have the support of 95 per cent of the population, are representatives of a single social system. Consequently no fundamental change is involved when state power is shifted from Democratic to Republican hands or back again. The actual control of state power remains where it was and where it must always be: in the hands of those who own and control the basic social and economic institutions of society. The army and navy do not revolt when a Democrat becomes their Commander-in-chief after twelve years of Republicans. They know that their duties and loyalties remain the same. The people as a whole do not grow unduly restive; they somehow know, in spite of the artificial heat of the campaign, that nothing much has really happened, that business and depressions and life will go on very much as usual. There cannot be any fundamental issue between the Republican and Democratic parties nor between any parties representing the same basic social interests.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Whatever real democracy exists is restricted to the individual members of the controlling minority, among whom, in capitalist society, the real issues of power are decided.

How the Capitalist Dictatorship Maintains Popular Support

The capitalist dictatorship, in spite of the fact that it operates directly counter to the needs of society and is indeed the major force working against the possibility of fulfilling these needs, cannot hope to maintain itself for long without the confidence or at least the sufferance of those it rules. It is for this reason that the capitalist dictatorship working through the capitalist state actively uses every means to keep up an artificial confidence in its own ability to manage the general business of society, and suppresses any forces that genuinely threaten to destroy this confidence.

The technique for maintaining this necessary minimum of consent and confidence is so complex and extends so intimately into every social detail that it cannot be adequately summarized. Certainly one of its chief supports in this country as elsewhere is the belief that the government is the freely chosen representative of the whole of society, independent of any class or group conflicts and therefore able to be fair and impartial, to carry out "the will of the people." This belief is forced on every citizen from his earliest years. It is the theme of text books and classrooms, of orators and editorial writers, of campaign speeches and Administration announcements, of movies and plays and radio broadcasts and sermons. It reaches its culmination in war-time, when the citizen is called on to sacrifice himself for "his" country; but it is built up aggressively throughout every hour of peace as well as of war.

The technique includes also propagation of the belief that the capitalist state is able to, is competent to, manage the general social business, if given a chance by the citizenry. Failures are never mentioned, except at election time; the publicity always points forward, to the schemes and plans and deals that will make everything turn out all right in the future.

The technique includes, lastly, the direct and indirect

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

coercion exercised against those who attempt to destroy the prestige of the state. This coercion ranges from "the pressure of public opinion" directed against the "unpatriotic" to the deputies and troops and jailors who are brought in when "peaceful methods" fail.

The Specific Aim of a Revolutionary Party

The American Workers Party is a revolutionary party. The purpose of a revolutionary party is similar to that of a capitalist party to the extent that the revolutionary party likewise aims to achieve and consolidate state power. But, unlike a capitalist party, it proposes to do this as only one essential step in changing fundamentally the whole social order. It proposes not simply to step into state office, into the Presidency and Congress, but to do away entirely with the present basis of state power. It recognizes openly that the actual control of state power must always be in the hands of those who own and control the basic social and economic institutions. It therefore proposes that that ownership and control should be taken from the hands of bankers and industrialists, and be put where it belongs, in the hands of the workers and the other producing elements of society. As a necessary phase of this change of ownership and control and the attainment of a genuine workers' democracy, the American Workers Party proposes, as the representative of the workers and producers, to take control of state power.

The opportunity for the revolutionary party of the workers to take power will come in the course of the progressive disintegration of material life and of culture under capitalist dictatorship. The nation will find itself faced with growing hunger, impoverishment, curtailment of social services, and the threat or actuality of Fascism and war. As a result of this chaos produced by the capitalist dictatorship, and through the educational and agitational activity of the advanced workers in the revolutionary movement, a time will come when the major sections of the population will support the principles of a workers' democracy. As a measure of defense against the sui-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

cial course of capitalist dictatorship, the workers will take power.

The Defense of the Workers' State

The revolutionary government must be prepared to meet the violence of the overthrown but still dangerous capitalist dictatorship. Against the forces of reaction, seeking to recall the old order, the workers must fight with every weapon to establish their own democracy. Against capitalist legality, serving the interests of a bankrupt minority, must be set revolutionary legality, resting on the will of the overwhelming majority. No parliamentary triumphs can insure the victory of a workers' democracy. The workers must take possession of every branch and office of the capitalist state, to render them incapable of counter-revolutionary activity.

The conquest of political power cannot be achieved at one step. In order to consolidate the positions it has won against the efforts of enemies of the new social order, the workers' government will issue and enforce stringent revolutionary laws directed against all who attempt to undermine the new regime. It will mobilize the greatest possible number of workers into special organizations devoted to the defense of their revolution. Thus, while securing itself from attack, the revolutionary government will proceed to bring order into the chaos inherited from the capitalist dictatorship and to build the foundations of a real workers' democracy.

The New Political Form of Society

A new state form will be developed on the basis of occupational activity instead of territorial status. The substantial beginnings of this new form are already to be found within capitalist society, in the unions and federations of workers, farmers, professionals, and technicians, in co-operatives and other mass organizations. Carrying out the possibilities of this type of organization, representatives of the workers, in field and shop, home and office, mine and railroad, school and laboratory, will be elected to serve on Workers' Councils—the functional

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

administrative unit of the Workers' State. The professional politician will disappear, his place to be taken by the working representative of the producers, in direct touch with the needs of those who have elected him, and possessed of the detailed knowledge necessary for controlling economic administration. Every effort will be made to acquaint all workers with the chief political and industrial tasks of the new state, and to insure full democratic control of the great projects of social reconstruction undertaken by the planned economy of the new society.

As soon as political stability is restored, the first act of the revolutionary government will be to call a constitutional convention of Workers' Councils to set forth the fundamental principles around which the new socialist society is to be built up. The revolutionary government—the Workers' State—must be regarded as the democratic instrument by which the contradictions of the capitalist system are solved. It will continue its defensive measures against the enemies of the new order until the educational processes it directs succeed in eliminating the anti-social ideals imposed by capitalist education, and until the development of the productive forces of society makes it possible to do away with the system of wage payments.

Socialization

It has already been made clear that the most important of the economic measures to be taken by the revolutionary government in its initial period is the appropriation and socialization, without compensation, of all monopolies in industry and land; all mines, factories, and shipping; all public utilities, railroads and other organized means of communication; all banks, credit agencies, gold stores; and all other supplies that the revolutionary government finds it necessary to requisition for defense of the Workers' State and for the further construction of socialism.

It is well to remember that this socialization of the means of production injures only the small handful of financiers, landlords, and industrialists whose private control of the productive resources of the country is now and will continue to be the

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

source of hunger, eviction, unemployment, and insecurity for the great bulk of the people. Indeed, not only have the majority at present no interest of ownership in the productive resources in the country; they are left with scarcely any private property even of a personal kind: their homes and small farms are mortgaged; their furniture and automobiles are owned by corporations, through the installment system of buying; their savings are controlled by banks which make profits on them; their insurance is manipulated by capitalist enterprises for the benefit of stockholders and directors. In fact, under modern conditions, socialization of the means of production is the only way to protect and increase private possessions of a personal nature. There will be no need for the Workers' State to molest small individual proprietors and farmers. The example of the social and personal advantages of the socialist organization of production can be trusted to teach them voluntary collectivization.

The policy of socialization pursued by the Workers' State will make possible the guarantee to every willing worker of a well-paid job, security against unemployment, and insurance against industrial risks, old age, and sickness. Under capitalist dictatorship, a great deal of the productive plant of the country is unused because it is unprofitable to operate. This becomes increasingly the case with the increase of the productivity of labor and the continuous improvement of machinery. Socialization, by freeing production from subordination to the control of the capitalist dictatorship in its own interests, and from the necessity of operating at a profit, will release the productive forces to serve the needs of men, and will enable production to be planned rationally in terms of actual social requirements. It will allow the utilization of every technical improvement. It will assure immediate and steadily increasing material advantages to the nation and every worker within it. And the leisure and educational opportunities which will accompany these material advantages, together with removal of the dead-weight of the perverted capitalist culture, will offer every individual possibilities for the fullest creative development.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

World-Socialism

The aim of the American Workers Party is not completely stated until the task is shown to be not merely to take political power and establish socialism within the United States, but to join with the revolutionary workers of all other countries in building world-socialism. A world socialist society is the only solution for the contradictions in present world-society, and even for the complete solution of the contradictions within a single nation. Only a socialist society can utilize rationally the natural resources and productive machinery of the earth in the interests of the peoples of the earth. A federated community of socialist republics can alone solve the conflict between the efficient development of productive forces and the restrictions of artificial national boundaries. A socialist society alone will be in a position to grant the rights of free cultural self-determination and self-development to all nations and all individuals. Only world-socialism will remove the causes of international wars that under capitalism now seriously threaten to send mankind into barbarism or complete destruction.

Upon coming to power, therefore, the Workers' State will at once issue a Proclamation of Friendship to the peoples of all countries. It will withdraw all U. S. troops from foreign soil; grant the unconditional right of self-determination to United States dependencies; call for immediate, total and universal disarmament; give warning to all capitalist powers that the workers of the United States will defend the new American Revolution against all attacks; and call for the establishment of a world-wide federation of workers' republics.

* * *

This, in brief compass, represents the chief objectives of the American Workers Party. The nature of the historical process makes detailed blueprints of the future co-operative society and the transitional period by which it is to be reached impossible. But the clear vision of the revolutionary goal and the intelligent application of the fundamental revolutionary principles will assure the outcome.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Chapter III

THE INADEQUACY OF EXISTING PARTIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

A POLITICAL party is necessary to carry into effect the revolutionary transformation of the social order from capitalism and the masked dictatorship of the money-lenders, the capital-owners and the manipulators of other people's money, into an open and determined workers' democracy. It is furthermore necessary that the revolutionary party be deeply and solidly rooted in the social base of the revolution, the workers in industry, in the fields, in the mines, in the offices and in the service. Next, the need is for unity of all the rebel forces of the working class, a coherent, intelligent and effective unification in purpose and in effort. Before a new effort to unite the present revolutionary forces and elements is attempted, it is well that a clear appraisal is made of the material at hand. For ours is not the first attempt.

Time and again groups have taken the field in militant defense of their interests, sometimes with sound programs and sometimes under the influence of demagogic leaders. But practically in every case groups have remained small, isolated from the millions who should join with them in struggle but have not. The costly disunity among the rebel forces must be ended. The discontent, the protest, the struggle must all flow in one channel to achieve serious results. But if so, would the addition of a new party to the field, one more among several already claiming to represent the interests of labor or of all oppressed classes, not be a blow to unity?

We proceed from the position, that not abstract or mechanical unity is the aim but unity that can be effectively operated and made instrumental in the achievement of our major goal. A

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

mere federation of the programs and tactics of existing parties of protest would therefore lead us nowhere, since upon careful analysis those parties appear unsatisfactory. Under existing circumstances, then, the founding of a new radical party is the one possible step toward effective unity.

The Socialist Labor Party

The oldest radical party in the field is the Socialist Labor party, founded about half a century ago, and at one time a significant factor in the development of American radical thought and organization. This party has, in the course of years, become a propagandist group living in practical isolation from the immediate struggles of the workers and of the broad mass movements of the day. It does not attempt to play an active part in the struggle of classes in the country, and it substitutes dogmatic reiteration of abstract principles for the workers' battles for power. However useful its propagandist work may appear to be, its place in the political situation is of but limited significance.

The Socialist Party

The Socialist party, the largest in the field, has frankly abandoned the revolution as its major aim. It has settled down to social reformist activity and has confined its outlook to what can be accomplished within the strict constitutional limits of conventional political activity. Electioneering and those forms of pressure upon legislative bodies which are exclusively related to the forms known as petition and protest, are about all the party is inclined to do. Although thousands of individual socialists in this country do not share this fallacious and historically discredited belief that capitalism can be gradually reformed to death, the American Socialist party steadfastly and sternly holds to the fiction.

The Socialist party draws a sharp, an entirely arbitrary and hence an anti-revolutionary line of demarcation between the political and the economic struggle of the workers. It leaves the latter to the exclusive jurisdiction of the trade union move-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

ment, which is nearly always socially narrow and is "betting on the bosses," if and when not outright reactionary or even corrupt. The Socialist party takes cognizance of the workers' industrial struggles only to the extent of rendering auxiliary relief or publicity services, but in every other way seeks to remain "neutral" in the conflicts of ideas, objectives and organizing principles which these struggles so abundantly express or reflect. No large political purposes will ever be achieved by the labor movement if this most powerful base, the industrial struggle, will be left to drift or go in circles, or move intellectually backward. The party's record in this most important field is further marred by its policy of siding with the conservative elements as against the progressive forces in every contest in a union for influence or control. It has always wholeheartedly supported the "official" labor leadership and invariably remained "neutral" while progressives and militants fought the stalwarts and the pure and simple reactionaries.

The Socialist party has implicitly and explicitly abandoned the revolutionary objectives of its earlier days, at just about the time when revolution has been placed on the world's order of business. But even its reformist outlook is timid, tired, and rudderless. Its attitude toward the NRA and President Roosevelt's program has been vague, inconclusive and pointless. It has failed to draw a sharp line between its own program of immediate demands and the Rooseveltian New Deal. That a number of leading members of the party went straight into the Roosevelt camp without a twinge of conscience or any violent disagreement with the leaders in office is but proof of the intellectual decay of the Socialist party even as a party of reform. Where the Socialist party has had power, as in Milwaukee, Reading and Bridgeport, its policies are scarcely distinguishable from those of capitalist political parties, except perhaps for its support of the shallow "good government" and "cheap government" typical of fusion and reform movements.

Thus it is clear that the Socialist party cannot in any way be considered a fit or usable instrument in the immediate struggles to maintain, defend or improve the workers' power in the

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

present state of affairs. Still less is it possible of use as an instrument of the revolutionary fight for eventual power and the establishment of a workers' democracy to supplant the capitalist dictatorship. Large and ever-growing numbers of workers in the Socialist party have come to a realization of this truth about their organization. They desire, however, to remain inside the party because it is "a going concern" and they hope to reform it from within. This is a hopeless program, because the party leadership is determined to put down any opposition to their rule, and whenever an insurgency, aiming at a militant change of policy develops, the rebels are forced out or obliged to remain silent.

The Communist Party

The Communist party of the United States holds title to preeminence in the field of professing revolutionary intentions. Its program is radical indeed. However, in the fifteen years of the party's activity, it has been anything but successful in winning the recognition of the American working class. The Communist party in this country rose to life out of the despair of the militant members of the Socialist party to revolutionize their party's leadership and to activize its machinery. The reflected impact of the revolutionary developments in Russia and their repercussions in Germany, Hungary and nearly everywhere else in the Old World, lent a halo to the new movement on this side of the ocean. In fact, the Communist party appeared as the carrier of the principles of the great workers' republic, the Soviet Union, and basking in this glory, it secured a ready and generous hearing and, for a time a substantial following in the American labor world. But soon enough, the party dissipated this unusual opportunity. In fact, beginning with 1925 it kept losing the ground it had acquired in 1922-1923 in the trade unions and the other mass movements.

With a membership, in numerous cases enthusiastic, devoted and ready to give their all for the success of the revolutionary movement, and the advantage of the spiritual kinship

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

with the Russian Revolution, the Communist party all but destroyed itself because it embarked upon a suicidal policy of sectarianism and partisan exclusiveness. The party has been functioning in this country with utmost disregard for the conditions, for the human material, and for the historic set-up and all the other circumstances of which a revolutionary party must take cognizance if it wishes to be effective and successful.

Despite the many drives, campaigns and mass-activities in which the Communist party took part in the fifteen years of its existence, there are no substantial sections of the American working class that would regard the party as a part of their own existence. Throughout its history it has thought and felt in terms of Russian and European rather than American working class experience. There are no indications that it can overcome this handicap in the crucial period ahead of us.

The ability of a revolutionary party to read the trends of development in the country where it seeks to achieve power is crucial. Inability to make itself understood by the native workers and to gain access to their movement would seal the doom of a revolutionary party however good and true its program. But the Communist party has shown exceptional ability for misreading social and economic trends and a capacity bordering on genius for alienating large sections of the working class. It has demonstrated its social-economic color-blindness when it monthly prophesied immediate and severe unemployment and banked on "revolution" and "collapse" throughout 1925-1929, when immediate reality warranted no such political orientation. By its sectarian course and disruptive activities in the unions and other mass organizations, the party simultaneously estranged itself even from those parts of the working class where radicalism was looked on favorably. There is no evidence up to this time that the party is overcoming its sectarian approaches.

The Communist party evidently believes, or at least it has been acting from the belief, that to defend democratic institutions is to aid in bringing on reaction; that reformists are "twins" of fascists or even worse; that dissident revolutionaries are police spies; that sporadic violence against reactionaries is

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

good for the workers; that the southern states should be an independent Negro Republic; that A. F. of L. unions are identical with company unions; that Roosevelt is the same as Hitler. The party has steadfastly regarded as "counter-revolutionary" any organizations or persons who oppose these absurd ideas. In consequence it has been unable to develop broad actions against oppression, misery and reaction, when the time and circumstances were entirely favorable. Many workers' groups which would like to join such actions, have remained isolated or impotent due to lack of leadership. Farmers and other discontented elements of the population who might have become militant allies of the workers have been repulsed and have remained passive or have been misled by demagogues into energetic and brave battles for proposals which were really against their own best interests.

Despite the party's boasts of growth, it is at a standstill. The subsidiary organizations it controls are rich in officers and letterheads but have few members. When the party calls on the masses of the people in hysterical tones to take some action, the masses fail to respond. To make up for this isolation the party resorts to opportunistic appeals, in violation of its professed principles, and thus seeks to give an impression of vitality, or win an occasional mock-victory.

It is unfortunate but true that despite its very best revolutionary intentions, the Communist party has neither advanced the cause of revolutionizing the situation or the masses, nor has it done anything to advance the immediate interests of the producing class. It has not helped raise wages, get unemployment relief, or secure the civil and political rights of large masses. The strikes it has led have been sensational and the workers have fought courageously, but incompetent and sectarian leadership has brought an inglorious defeat. The unions organized by the party proved to be instruments of division. The mass organizations intended to draw the masses of the people into militant action remained paper organizations moving about in a vacuum.

The truly tragic failure of the Communist party to raise the revolutionary standard resulted in intellectual decay. The

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

party brought into the movement unspeakably low, vicious tactics of self-defense and of attack. The party vilely slanders those who differ with it. Its press is full of queer statistics, of plain lies and even photographic faking. It has made an art of misrepresenting not only the class enemy (who should be represented properly in order that he may be scotched effectively) but also all liberals, reformists, radicals and dissident revolutionaries. It has become thoroughly cynical, and treats workers and farmers as fools, ignoramuses and cowards who have to be tricked into fighting for their interests. It caps the climax by aping fascism. Time and again the party has ordered its members to break up meetings called by other labor organizations and to beat up spokesmen of other viewpoints in the labor movement.

Back of many of the deficiencies of the American Communist party lies the fact of its organizational subordination to the Communist International, which has tended in recent years to become a branch of the foreign office of the Soviet Union instead of the leader of the world revolution. Under these circumstances, it is impossible for the American Communist party to develop a revolutionary policy adapted to the needs of this country.

The Communist party has brought disgrace to the term communism. Many people associate extremism, hooliganism, lying, splitting for splitting's sake, fakery, opportunism, sell-out and dozens of other crimes and iniquities with the word communism. All this is the more deplorable since we remember that in this country as anywhere else the labor movement must be united within itself and with all the socially progressive elements in the nation if it is to prevent the triumph of fascism and achieve the workers' victory. The workers sense the need for unity and are tired of divisions. They will not follow any organization which is sectarian in character and divisive in its effects. They are crying for a unifying force. Unity can be achieved only on the basis of a sound approach, policy and program.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Farmer Labor and Reform Movements

There is, in this country, an incipient farmer labor movement of which a revolutionary analysis of the situation must take cognizance. At present the movement is weak and inconsequential. The recently organized Farmer-Labor Federation as yet remains a mere label. Its programmatic vagueness has not been rewarded by practical achievements. The Farmer-Labor party of Minnesota remains the one outstanding unit of this type of movement, and its political course has been of declining value, even as a unifying factor. Parties in other states have not come into being save some very small and, on the whole, narrowly confined local efforts.

It is not inconceivable, though, or improbable that in the course of events, as the workers and the farmers awaken to political consciousness, there will come into existence parties of labor and of farmers, in the several states or even nationally. The sure-to-come failure of the Roosevelt Administration's effort to restore the capitalist profit system to sound continued functioning is fairly certain to cause a political activization of great masses of workers and farmers. The programs and the course that such parties, if and when formed, will follow would depend very largely upon the circumstances attending their formation. The active existence of a revolutionary party in such an eventuality, is certain to be of great and positive value to the movement. The American Workers Party is rightly organizing now to be prepared to be a constructive factor in whatever development the future holds. But it is clear from all past experience that of itself a farmer-labor party is not likely to play a leading part in the revolutionary unfoldment of the country's crisis; still less can one of the type be counted on to drive events to a revolutionary crisis.

Whether or not a significant labor farmer party is likely to rise is at the present time a matter of speculation. During the period of the rapid decline of capitalism, a number of social-economic movements will develop. Each is likely to have political representatives of its own. There is the likelihood that some people will continue to hold out a while longer for what

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

might be called "simple reaction"—a return to the good old days of Adam Smith economics, Coolidge-Hoover individualism, and free competition. "Simple reaction" may have a temporary spurt, if Roosevelt's or other like recovery policies are sufficiently discredited by 1936. The reactionaries, working through the Republican party, might in that case, win the 1936 election. But that won't feed the hungry American people.

There is likewise the possibility that if the recovery efforts will dovetail with a temporary upturn in business the reformist variety of capitalist politics of which Roosevelt himself is at present the leader, will become increasingly influential. The Democratic party, under Roosevelt, will then be a possible contender for leadership in "right" reformism. The American Federation of Labor, the Farmer-Labor groups, and finally, further to the left, right factions of the Socialist party will join the bandwagon.

The tactics of a revolutionary party in dealing with right reformist groups must be very carefully considered. Mere opposition is too simple a solution. The ordinary membership of these groups represent real deposits of social unrest, potential antagonism to the existing order, and they will have to be won to support the revolutionary movement. The revolutionary party must show them both by theory and historical example, and by their consequences in action, that reformist policies cannot work that the full change must be accomplished.

If, however, and this is more likely, the NRA and other capitalist recovery devices run their course and result in growing dislocation of industry, business and agriculture, in a still wider spread of misery and unemployment, two alternative possibilities, if not both together, may present themselves. There may be the "veiled reaction," an effort on the part of the ideologists of the middle class, prompted and financed by the financial and industrial oligarchy to create an open or disguised fascist movement. They will use almost "revolutionary" vocabulary in some cases, and demagogic appeal in all cases, and chauvinistic slogans in some other cases, in an effort to drug the people into social unconsciousness and temporarily diver

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

the danger of complete dislocation of capitalism. Or there will rise into being a fairly radical labor-farmer movement, or an alliance of two separately evolving farmer and labor political movements which will seek, more openly and more consistently to reform capitalism of its most flagrant shortcomings. A substantial part of the functioning labor leadership, above all, those in secondary positions of the movement, and a good many insurgent union leaders will be likely to be found at the head of such political reform developments. Or again, both movements may be engineered and manipulated by reactionary forces behind the scenes to the simple end of checkmating genuine revolutionary developments.

In the task of dealing with such situations, the revolutionary movement will face a peculiarly difficult problem. The membership of the openly reform movements will have to be patiently made to understand that the actual consequences of the policies of the reform movements, here as in all other countries, are directly opposed to their avowed aims, that the consequences act to preserve, not to reform capitalism into something that is not capitalism.

This, indeed, is the central danger of all reformist groups. If their actions were merely insufficient, merely went part of the way, they could be welcomed as part-time allies. But, in fact, they play into the hands of "veiled reaction," by diverting the energies of potentially revolutionary sections of their membership from the primary issue.

The Party's International Outlook

No revolutionary party will espouse a narrow national isolationist attitude. The problem of the revolutionary movement in one country has important similarities as well as dissimilarities from that of the movement in other lands. International conditions and events powerfully affect the life of the workers in each country. Capitalism and fascism organize internationally, so must labor. Wars made by imperialist interests threaten all the workers of all lands. Unquestionably, international machinery is needed through which the labor and revolutionary move-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

ments may exchange views and organize joint activities to advance the ultimate object of a workers' world. Under certain circumstances, the most direct and practical kind of cooperation between the labor and revolutionary movements of two or more countries is possible, and may profoundly influence world developments, as e. g. a general strike against war in several countries. Joint revolutionary movements may conceivably be carried through simultaneously in several countries in some international crisis, and an international revolutionary general staff is required in such a situation. The A. W. P. stands for one compact revolutionary labor international built up by actually functioning revolutionary parties of various countries and fusing them into a unit for waging the battles of the workers for the defense of the Soviet Union and against war, capitalism, fascism on a world-wide front.

There is danger, however, of being sentimental rather than realistic in the matter of labor internationalism, and putting the cart before the horse. In the present stage of capitalist development an International with nothing but weak and insignificant national sections can exercise no real influence over events. The primary contribution revolutionary workers in any country can make toward building an effective International is by building an effective revolutionary movement in their own country. The primary and fundamental problem of any revolutionary working class party in the present period is to get possession of state power. State power is national, not international. It has to be taken in Berlin, London, Paris, Washington, or in Geneva, for Switzerland, but not in Geneva for the whole world. The workers in each country are faced with certain conditions, they have a certain background, tradition, psychology. A revolutionary party must "feel" all this, feel how the workers in the country feel and think. This cannot be communicated to it from the outside.

These fundamental principles of revolutionary strategy have been disregarded by the Third International. These observations, as well as our criticisms of the Communist party in the United States, are entirely compatible with vigorous and

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

untiring defense of the workers' regime in the U. S. S. R. against the machinations of its capitalist and imperialist enemies.

The problem of developing an effective international of revolutionary labor is an exceedingly complex one. The American Workers Party will be concerned to do all that is in its power toward its solution, and remain in sympathetic contact and engage in discussions with all who are interested in that problem, and especially with those parties which like ourselves cannot accept either the Second or the Third International today.

Emphatically, however, we assert that our absorbing concern is with the colossal job on our own doorstep, building a revolutionary party in the U. S., rooted in American soil, its eyes fixed primarily upon American conditions and problems, attracting American workers who are concerned about their own situation. This is not chauvinism; it is the only way chauvinism will be defeated. This is not to desert the workers of other lands or the international labor movement. Capitalist-imperialist America would crush them. Only the American working class can defeat American capitalism and imperialism. When and as we do that we shall best serve the toilers of all lands, shall indeed play a leading part in their emancipation.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Chapter IV

THE ORIGIN IN ACTION OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

THE American Workers Party is not the creation of a number of individuals who made an intellectual analysis of the American and the world scene, concluded that a certain kind of revolutionary organization was needed, and set to work to bring it into existence. Rather is the A.W.P. the outgrowth of the practical experience, as well as the theoretical analysis, of an organization, the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, which for five years has been functioning in the closest touch with workers and farmers in mass organizations, such as trade unions, unemployed leagues and farmers' unions. It has been intimately involved in the day to day struggles of these organizations.

In the strike of textile workers in Marion, N. C., in 1929, where six mill-workers were killed on the picket-line by sheriffs' deputies; the strikes of miners in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and other states; the Paterson silk workers general strike of 1931; the amalgamation of the silk workers' unions and the building of an autonomous national federation of silk workers within the United Textile Workers of America; the launching of the first serious campaign for the organization of public utilities employes; organization campaigns and strikes of food, garment, steel and automobile workers and many others the C. P. L. A. through the national office or its branches or individual members has played a prominent part since its founding in 1929.

The C. P. L. A. has carried on a continuous and vigorous campaign for progressive and militant policies, against the pre-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

vailing A. F. of L. philosophy of collaboration with employers, and against autocracy, gangsterism, racketeering and allied evils when they have appeared in A. F. of L. and other unions. Such C. P. L. A. efforts in the United Mine Workers and the Progressive Miners of America, among the building trades unions of New Jersey (from which the notorious czar Brandle was driven out when the C. P. L. A. assisted the progressive elements in the New Jersey unions to turn the spotlight of publicity on him), in New York Local 3 of the electrical workers' union and in numerous other instances are a significant part of the history of trade unionism in the U. S. in recent years.

As the depression continued, C. P. L. A. forces were among the first to sense the importance of organizing the unemployed, the ineffectiveness of so-called barter organizations which enjoyed a great vogue at one time, the need for mass organizations engaged in bringing pressure to bear upon local, state and national authorities. A big percentage of the best known and most successful unemployed leagues in all sections of the country—Seattle, Los Angeles, St. Louis, southern Illinois, Ohio, Pittsburgh, Allentown, West Virginia, North Carolina—have been inspired and helped by C. P. L. A. This is true also of the outstanding national organization in the field, the National Unemployed League, formed at the great unemployed convention at Columbus, Ohio, July 4, 1933. Thousands of evictions have been stopped, relief appropriations increased, grievances on relief jobs adjusted, and unemployed who might otherwise have been drawn into one of the numerous fascist outfits have been made a part of a genuinely social movement, as a result of this unemployed league activity.

Similarly the C. P. L. A. and its members have participated actively in campaigns on behalf of Mooney, Billings, the Scottsboro boys and other political prisoners, in the struggle against the war danger and fascism, in the defence of the Soviet Union, against capitalist and imperialist attacks, and many similar movements.

The constant contact of the C. P. L. A. with mass organizations has profoundly affected its own development. It was

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

organized in May, 1929. The immediate occasion was the attack by the reactionary elements in the A. F. of L. on Brookwood Labor College, then the rallying center of the advocates of militant workers' education. This controversy was, however, but a reflection of the general situation in the labor movement at that time, which constituted the real cause for the organization of the C. P. L. A. In the five or six years preceding this event, the A. F. of L. had come completely into the control of right-wing and reactionary leadership which adopted the policies of business unionism and alliance with capitalism, and ruthlessly set out to stamp out all opposition to these policies. The "extreme radicals," now organized in the Communist party, had after a period of exaggerated emphasis on "boring from within," adopted a dual-union policy, had pretty well abandoned any effort to reform or revolutionize the official labor movement, and were largely out of touch with the mind and mood of the American masses. The Socialist party had in the main made the fatal mistake of lining up with the A. F. of L. leadership, or at least refraining from criticizing them and adopting a distinctive line of its own, and thus had largely lost its influence. The progressives and militant radicals of an earlier day had either disappeared or were scattered and ineffective. The C. P. L. A. was formed in an attempt to rally these progressives and militant radicals once more and to commit them to a program of aggression against the prevailing tendencies in the movement, rather than to more or less patient submission to them. During the early period of its existence the C. P. L. A. tried to include all laborites who were not definitely committed to prevailing reactionary policies. Its orientation, we might say, was vigorously progressive rather than militant or revolutionary. It looked for considerable support from many elements in the Socialist party and was inclined to depend upon sympathetic officials in certain unions as the chief medium of approach to the trade unions. Its efforts to revive and reform the unions and the labor movement generally, were mainly educational.

It was not long, however, before it was realized by the more active elements in the organization that if it was to accomplish the job it had tackled it must have a closely-knit, de-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

voted and disciplined membership rather than an association of miscellaneous elements. Its orientation became definitely militant rather than vaguely progressive as a result of its practical experience in dealing with such situations as presented by the United Mine Workers of America, for example. The Socialist party members acquiesced in C. P. L. A. policies as long as they were purely educational. When the organization began to engage in actual industrial struggle and to fight racketeering in the unions, Socialist dissent began to grow. Soon it became clear that the Socialist party, through its policy of "neutrality" in the unions, was hopelessly enmeshed in the reactionary and corrupt leadership of many unions. Out of the same ground roots grew likewise its hesitancy in endorsing militant union action, while some of its members aggressively opposed and sabotaged our fighting program.

It was clear to those active in the C. P. L. A. that the Socialist party was bankrupt in the American scene, as the Social Democracy has proved itself to be throughout the world. The Socialist party influence had to be purged from the organization — and this was done in 1931 and 1932.

It was found that the organization's position in a given union was an equivocal and precarious one if it depended chiefly on the sympathy of one or more officials. There was really no way of bringing effective influence to bear upon such officials. There was insufficient knowledge of what was actually happening in their organizations and so the C. P. L. A. found itself held responsible for activities, carried on by so-called progressives of every sort, about which it had had nothing to say. It came, therefore, to be accepted that while trade union officials as such were by no means barred from membership, the organization could not assume any responsibility where there was not in the union a definitely functioning group, including rank and filers, and that in many instances it would be only through the building up of a militant rank and file opposition in conflict with the officialdom, that a real clean-up could be accomplished.

Although from the beginning the C. P. L. A. advocated independent political action as a measure for which progressives in

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

the unions must stand, contact with workers and workers' organizations in the American scene, led to an evolution of the organizations' political program and activities.

By the time the first formal convention of the C.P.L.A. was held in September 1932 the active membership had become convinced that mass activity which did not proceed from a clear and correct theoretical viewpoint and which was not inspired and guided by an effective revolutionary political organization oriented toward the American problem and scene, would in the end prove fruitless. They were convinced also that "in the face of unparalleled opportunity and challenge the various political and theoretical organizations" especially the Communist party and Socialist party had failed to organize "an effective and satisfactory vanguard for American labor."

At this convention, accordingly, the C.P.L.A. was organized as a theoretical and political organization. The aim of the organization was defined as "to abolish, not to reform, the capitalist system—to establish in the U. S. a planned economic system operated in the interest of the workers and not of the few, and workers' republic affiliated with workers' republics throughout the world."

When, therefore, the C.P.L.A. met in its next convention in Pittsburgh in December 1933 and the delegates decided unanimously to begin the work of building the American Workers Party as the revolutionary expression of the American masses it was following out the logic of its own development.

Of course, this political evolution was hastened by events in Europe (the rise of Hitlerism, etc.) and by the advent of the Roosevelt Administration in the U. S., the significance of which has been analyzed elsewhere in this pamphlet.

Once again, however, a most important role in shaping the development of C.P.L.A. policy was played by the masses of the workers, their struggles and their organizations with which the C.P.L.A. was every moment in touch.

One of the cardinal principles of the C.P.L.A. had been the insistence on united action. In the Paterson general strike

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

1931, we had gathered together under our leadership every group willing to act unitedly—Socialists, Socialist Laborites, I. W. W.'s, "Communist Majority" followers, Associated Silk Workers, and United Textile Workers. When in the spring of 1933 the official Communist party announced a change in its line, stating that it would stand for a real united front, the C.P.L.A. was the outstanding group which welcomed this move. The Socialist party was clearly against united action. But in the united front, the C.P.L.A. learned that the Communist party could not shake off its sectarianism and that it could not play a revolutionary role in the U. S. A.

To quote one example of many: In Pittsburgh, the C.P.L.A. which had formed the unemployed leagues had fought strenuously against Socialist opposition for the united front. The Communist party and its affiliates now seek to strangle those very forces which stood for unity with them, although the Communist party itself could never rally such forces to its banner. This sterile policy has been carried on throughout the country. It has resulted in the further discrediting of the Communist party and its affiliated organizations.

There was but one further course open, and that was the creation of a party which could act in the American background. In our mass organizations it had been found difficult to convey the revolutionary message of the seizure of State power except through its personification in a political party with a well defined program. At the same time, the demand for political expression has become a burning issue in unemployed leagues. It must be answered—and the A. W. P. has furnished the clear and needed avenue for such political action.

As the American Workers Party has grown out of activity in mass organizations, so it must extend its mass organizations. That is its special function. Work in unemployed leagues is not enough. We must raise our banner further in the basic industries—coal, steel, textiles, automobiles, transportation, electric power. The Party recognizes its duty. Already it forms the most effective militant force in the mining industry. It cannot be content with that role. It must march forward to participation in the fight of the workers in every large industrial field.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

We realize above all that no revolutionary party can function which refuses to take part in the daily battles of the workers. In our participation with the workers in their daily struggles, we speak in the language they understand. Out of this realization and action upon it, will come that driving force which can and will abolish the profit system in America.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Chapter V

HOW THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY WILL FIGHT FOR POWER

The Main Line of Party Strategy

THE fact, already discussed in Part II, that every government rests in the last analysis on the support or confidence of the governed, shows clearly the general principles in accordance with which a revolutionary party must fight for power.

The American Workers Party will, on the one hand, attempt to win ever increasing popular confidence in itself, in its ability to take over power and use that power for the benefit of society. In short, the job of the American Workers Party is to convince the decisive sections of the American people that it can run society.

To accomplish this, there must be a constant development in the membership of the Party itself, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The Party must draw in the strongest and ablest of all categories of the workers and producers of the country, and do so in increasing numbers. It will continually strive to raise the theoretic level of its membership, to make it constitute a leadership fit in the eyes of the nation to take over the conduct of the affairs of the new social order.

Furthermore, the Party must constantly increase its influence on various mass organizations. It must show its ability to lead successfully in immediate, practical struggles, in strikes, demonstrations, mass action for relief and social insurance, fights against lynching, evictions, foreclosures, etc. It will carry on a constant propaganda, and convince the people of its theoretic competence by the cogency of its analysis, the accuracy of its

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

predictions, the applicability of its proposed solutions. And everywhere it must demonstrate in action the success of its mass leadership.

On the other hand, the American Workers Party will everywhere utilize every means to undermine confidence in the capitalist state and capitalist society. It will show in theory and in practice that capitalist solutions of social problems do not and cannot work. It will destroy the myth of the impartiality of the state, and show that, whatever may be the intentions of individual members of the Administration, the actual effect of their legislation is to protect profits, not to fulfill social needs—and that in the end they cannot even protect profits. It will attempt to direct every force of social unrest, every protest against suffering and poverty, every vague wish for a better ordered society, into a direct attack on the present system itself, into a will to achieve and hold power and to administer that power in the genuine interests of a free society of workers.

This undermining of confidence in the present system divides, again, into a double task. The American Workers Party is a *political* party, and this means that all of its activities must have a *political* orientation. The party can never rest at the mere demand for better living—more pay, shorter hours, higher relief, better working conditions. It will on all occasions show how these demands have a political reference, how they are ultimately connected with the question of who holds state power. In every strike, the party will point out clearly the exact meaning of the intervention of the agents of the state—deputies, state troopers, the National Guard; it will show the practical operation of governmental bodies as strike-breakers on the side of the owners; it will trace the connections between bankers and government and the cutting down of relief; it will show the effects of inflation on the generality of workers in all fields; it will make clear the relations between the international policies of the government and the requirements of bankers and industrialists. In this way the workers will be brought to understand whose government it is, and why the only real solution even of their immediate economic difficulties must be *political*, must be the

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

taking over of the government by the revolutionary Party as their own representative.

Secondly, in those cases where non-political economic aims are emphasized, it will be the effort of the revolutionary Party to direct the aims against property relations peculiar to the present form of society. Demands for higher wages harass profits, but do not necessarily destroy them or the profit system. Such demands as "No Evictions," "No Foreclosures," "Direct Relief and Federal Insurance," likewise, are partial and inadequate. But these latter are implicitly aimed at the foundations and basic laws of the present economic system. The problem of the Party is not merely to achieve power, but to achieve it for the sake of the new order. And this means that in achieving it, the Party must destroy the old.

The Winning of Mass Organization

The American Workers Party will penetrate into all groups where social discontent, potentially revolutionary in character, is present. The effort of the Party will be to clarify such discontent, to direct it toward its sole actual solution—a direct attack on the present system, and the actual gaining of state power. It will make clear the inadequacy of any partial solution. It will stimulate the will and the drive for power.

To accomplish this penetration into every thread of the social fabric, the Party will work within existing mass organizations of many descriptions, and will create new mass organizations where none are already in existence. The mass organizations must be swung into the line of the central issue. To bring this about the Party will have its own members actively present within the organizations, and will keep up from the outside a constant pressure of education and propaganda.

It is impossible to predict all the types of organization that will gain strategic importance as the crisis is intensified. Many new types will arise, but the following, on the basis of the immediate situation, are crucial:

1. *Trade Unions.* Of all mass organizations, the trade unions are of most importance from the point of view of a revo-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

lutionary party; and of all trade unions, the unions of workers in the large shops, mills, factories, and mines of the basic industries.

The fundamental importance of the unions in the big shops and mines follows from a variety of considerations. Primary among these is the fact that the solution even for the immediate problems of these workers is, much more obviously than in the case of any other group, the full solution. None of their difficulties can be even approximately solved within the profit system. Other groups, with more seeming justification, demand a partial solution. For example, the farmers may believe that they want their own land free of mortgage and debt and taxes, with high prices for their produce. But even if this could be brought about, it would solve no problems but the farmers'. And in the end, it cannot solve the farmers' problems either, for they would find no market for their high priced products, the state would be forced to tax their land to carry on the business of government, the farmers would soon again be driven into debt. Or, to take a second example, the small trader or industrialist wants to be protected against the encroachments of monopoly, wants a chance to carry on his own little business in his own way. But here, too, even if his wants were gratified, only his own problems would be solved. And here, too, in the long run, his own problems cannot be solved in his way, since his solution runs counter to economic forces that the state is powerless to control.

The only solution for the workers of the big shops, the only way in which they can be assured work, security, and a decent living, is to have the shops run to serve the needs of society and not to make a profit for private individuals and corporations. This, and this only, will release the machinery now braked by the overload of capital debt and the impossibility of finding solvent purchasers of commodities. And, in the last analysis, this solution, the solution of the industrial workers, is the only solution for all of the groups of workers and producers.

There are many other considerations demonstrating the central position of the industrial workers. It is they who feel most directly and brutally the full weight of capitalist exploita-

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

tion. They, too, are the most strategically placed in the fight for power, since the shops and factories they run are the very basis of modern society—when these shops stop, the whole system stops. Again, they already carry on their work in a co-operative and socialized manner, and the change to the new order will be for them less drastic, easier of adjustment. And, if they wish to use it to gain power, they have already, because of the conditions of production, the strength of organized and co-ordinated numbers.

The American Workers Party will, in a double sense, base itself on the industrial workers. It will, in the first place, try from the start to increase its membership among the industrial workers, to win their confidence, and to occupy influential positions in their organizations. It will penetrate the unions already existing among them, and activize them along the lines of the party program, directing and politicalizing their economic struggles until these become genuinely a struggle for political power. It will organize new unions in the industries now relatively unorganized; and, if necessary because of the hopelessly reactionary character of the bureaucracy of old unions, break the workers away from the reactionary leaders. It will teach in action the impossibility of any tactics of "class collaboration," and the necessity for the militant, determined struggle of the workers for their own rights and their own government.

In the second place, even where little actual progress is made among the industrial workers, the American Workers Party will make the needs and historical position of these workers its point of theoretic orientation. The industrial workers will be taken as the base army; other groups as allies to be won to the support of the workers—won, of course, not by deceit and demagogic promises, but by convincing other groups that the workers' program is the only program that will, in the end, benefit them. Only in this way will the revolutionary Party be assured that when power is achieved, it will be power to bring about the free workers' democracy, and not power to uphold once more a disguised form of the old order.

With this as its base, the Party will penetrate similarly the

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

unions and federations of all groups of workers, directing, activizing, politicalizing their struggles.

2. *Farmers.* The potentially revolutionary character of the farmers of the United States has been apparent throughout our history. It has been emphasized in the last year or two by the openly violent "holiday" movements, milk strikes, anti-foreclosure and anti-eviction meetings, etc. For such reasons as were noted above, a revolutionary party cannot base its program exclusively or primarily on the farmers. But one thing is clear: the farmers know that they must at least get rid of mortgages and debt, must at least be able to get a living from the sale of their produce. And they too are beginning to see that they cannot gain these ends under the present system. They are beginning to demand power and control; and in that demand, the demand to take away power from those now holding it, their aims are the aims of the revolutionary Party.

3. *Negroes and other oppressed racial groups.* There is a potentially militant source of social unrest of primary magnitude among the Negroes, and to a lesser extent, among such racial groups as the Japanese, Mexicans and Filipinos in California. This unrest will be turned by the Party toward the fight for power of all workers and producers. The Party must convince both Negro and white workers that their interests are the same. It will show how racial differences are used by the capitalist dictatorship to drive down the standard of living of all workers and to keep the workers and producers from uniting. It will fight against every form of race discrimination, against wage differentials, lynching, Jim Crowism, all types of race chauvinism.

4. *Professional workers.* The position of the professional workers in this country—doctors, architects, engineers, scientists, teachers, lawyers, artists, writers—is becoming steadily and rapidly worse, and there is no chance, under the present order, for its betterment. Unemployment among them is extraordinarily high; average incomes are drastically lower; the chances for new recruits from graduate and technical schools even for finding any sort of job are fast disappearing. These groups are

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

of peculiar importance in this country: they include many millions of persons, an extraordinarily high percentage of the population; their members are sufficiently educated to be made aware of the need for revolutionary change; they are watching the fate of the professionals under fascism with growing alarm; they are, especially perhaps the teachers and engineers, in a position to influence a great part of the population; they are increasingly indignant at a social order that gives them no opportunity to make use of the abilities for which they have spent so many years in training.

The American Workers Party must overcome the traditional hesitancy of American professional workers to take part in social and political activity. It will build up organizations of professionals, and work within existing organizations, so that they may act as allies of the other workers' groups in the fight for power.

5. *Unemployed.* The great and largely permanent army of the unemployed during the period of the rapid decline of capitalism is a vast depository of every kind of social discontent and potential disturbance. In a position where the conduct of their lives has lost social meaning, the unemployed will join with the movement that convincingly promises them a new and integral place in the social order. This may be the army in the next war, it may be the party of fascism. It is the task of the American Workers Party to direct the unemployed into its own ranks and along its direction. The governmental handling of the unemployed in great projects under the CCC, CWA, CWS, etc., however doubtful may be its other benefits, does at any rate present new possibilities for the building up of effective mass organization.

There are other and there will be new kinds of organizations—of artists and writers whose creative work is frustrated by the moral and intellectual sterility of the present order, of consumers protesting against the high prices and worthless qualities of the goods sold them, of architects who wish to rebuild cities and engineers who wish to remodel factories. The Party will

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

build within these movements concentration points, spheres of influence, to direct them toward the central issue.

The Fight Against War

Whatever may be the hopes of the majority of the American people, the war preparations of the Roosevelt Government, whose war budget is by far the greatest in the entire world, make evident that our present rulers anticipate war in the near future. The growing realization of the approach of a new imperialist war is developing in the United States an opposition to war among many groups whose aims are otherwise at variance. Since inevitable causes of war lie within the capitalist system itself, this movement against war, if properly directed, is an integral part of the revolutionary movement to overthrow the entire capitalist system.

The duty of the American Workers Party toward war is clear. It will struggle on every front against war. It will unite in this struggle with every group honestly opposed to war, however different their aims on other questions. It will help workers organize to stop the shipment of munitions to warring countries. It will make clear by education and propaganda the causes of imperialist wars. And it will support the struggles of subject nations against the capitalist powers, since these struggles are implicitly directed against capitalism.

If a general war does occur during the period of the decline of capitalism, the workers and producers of the world will be confronted with perhaps the most momentous issue of history. The next great war, utilizing methods of warfare already developed, threatens to be so devastating as to destroy civilization itself. In such a case, the revolutionary parties of the world must act together to prevent, by every possible means of mass action, strike, sabotage and agitation, the prosecution of the war. And if these means, too, fail, the revolutionary parties must work at once to show the workers and producers how to turn the imperialist war into a war for the liberation of society and the achievement of the new order.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Participation in Elections

The conception of political action directing the outline of the Party's activities has differed radically from the traditional American notion of "politics." In this difference is to be discovered once again the distinction between a revolutionary party and every other political party. The task of a revolutionary party is to change society, not move spectacularly over the public facades. The political action that matters is the kind that brings large masses of people into motion; and motion toward the polls is not in the end the most important.

This does not mean that the American Workers Party will neglect the traditional methods of American politics. In particular, the Party, wherever and whenever possible, will participate in local, state, and national elections, and will fight to win elections. Naturally, the Party will not expect to carry through its program simply by gaining a Congressional majority. But elections will give the Party opportunities to appear openly before the people of the country, to present its aims and its programs, to cut through the sham issues to the real issues that face us and that must be solved. Success in elections will put Party members in a strategic position not only to facilitate the organization and help the struggles of workers and farmers, but above all to harass the capitalist control of the state, to show publicly the real nature of government policies, to uncover their hypocrisies and deceptions.

Campaigns will therefore be conducted along the same lines as the other types of mass activities. They will be motivated by carefully chosen slogans, issues, demands. The direction of these will be determined as always by the central aims: the release of the productive forces of the nation to serve the needs of the workers and producers instead of the demands of corporate and individual enrichment; the replacement of a capitalist dictatorship by a free democracy of workers.

THE REVOLUTIONARY AMERICAN TRADITION

THE United States was born in revolution. It grew through militancy and daring.

Its rebirth, now an unpostponable need, will come through revolutionary upheaval. A bourbon class, whether blue-blooded or gold lined, never has the sense to retreat when its continuance in power becomes a social liability. It will try to pull the whole nation down with it as it sinks into oblivion. Our ruling plutocracy is driving the people to revolt and leading this country to revolution. Revolution holds no terror to the American mind. Revolutionary changes, broader in scope and more widely ramified than in any country and people abroad in recent history, characterizes our national development. If the fate of this people's future is to be decided in battle, those who provoke it won't be the winners.

Our social system is outworn. Our social order is out of tune with the enormous progress labor or productive capacity has made. Due to this discrepancy between our productive development and our social system, we starve while we have plenty, and unless the prevailing social system is totally overhauled we shall die as a people. Catastrophe will be avoided, and happiness of all will displace misery of the many millions if the need of a drastic change will be realized by the people of the United States and they will act from that realization. The people of the pioneers who fought for independence against chattel slavery, who cut across the wilderness of a continent and removed all material obstacles in the path of civilized progress will not, of their free will, permit an obsolete social arrangement to block their march toward security and social and economic equality. The capitalist dictatorship cannot for ever last over the resistance of a workers' democracy, a farmers' insurgency, the rise of the masses of the people. The revolutionary tradition surges in American blood. Not in the blood

of fossil, idle-rich and sterile "Daughters" and "Sons" of "Old Glory" but of the workers and the farmers of the nation, of those whose honest toil adds value to our resources and is the foundation of our great future.

Wage slavery must be abolished. The profit system is doomed. Our technology applied to our natural resources can be made the basis of a rich and growing life. The American people can be trusted to overthrow the hold-over power of the past and to order their lives upon a new basis if only they will realize the extent of the evil that the dominant system does to them, and use their strength to do away with it.

Militancy has marked the history of the two major groups of the American people, the workers on the land and the workers in industry. Free from the inhibitions of serfdom which made the peasant class in many European countries a retrograde force in politics, the American farmers, over the one hundred and fifty years of United States history present a continuous and generally progressive insurgency. Political progressivism, however inconsequential its victories finally proved to be, derived its major support in the farmer states. The term "agrarianism" which in the old world had the connotation of reaction, denoted in the United States a movement onward from established political and social routine, when not outright revolutionary. The American farmers valiantly fought for a way out of the present social and economic impasse, and the means used in this battle have been neither docile nor pacifist. Farmers have learned to act as a group. They know the meaning of unity and organization. If they lack as yet in clear and advanced social orientation and outlook, their militancy is beyond dispute.

Likewise is the record of American labor one of militancy. It has been second to none in volume of fighting for a larger place in the sun. Stubborn and often violent encounters with employers, and not infrequently with the agencies of the governmental authority abound in the history of the labor movement. The fights of the railroad workers in 1877, 1894, 1916, and 1922, the Homestead strike, the "Debs rebellion," the

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

struggles of the Molly Maguires, the battles of the Knights of Labor, the eight hour day movements, the early history of the I.W.W., the tragic conflicts at Ludlow, at Calumet, at Trinidad, these are but a few of the landmarks in a history which generously supports confidence in the revolutionary fighting quality of the American workers.

But the battles of the past lacked in point of far-reaching social outlook. The peculiar circumstances under which American life developed made the movement excessively "pragmatic," fearful of a theoretic orientation, disinclined to generalize domestic and foreign experience with sufficient breadth and vigor. Conservatives and certain groups of would-be radicals alike have erected a theory of would-be "American exceptionalism" from the general ideological fortunes of labor everywhere. Such facts as our alleged Anglo-Saxon background and a consequent individualism of American labor, on the one hand, and the comparatively higher living standards of labor in the United States on the other, as well as the class fluidity of population in the United States, were used to prop this "theory" of exceptionalism. A careful analysis of facts and trends leaves the exceptionalist idea deflated. If we properly consider the multi-lateral effects of political sectionalism, of the part that racial set-up has played in American politics, and if we make sufficient allowance for the rich natural resources of the country and hence the comparatively high standard of living, all this now a matter of the past, the unavoidable conclusion is that the workers in America and those in the Old World are brothers under the skin. Given a forward direction they will march toward the same goal of a classless society and workers' democracy as labor in all countries has embraced.

The past of America, of its workers in industry, on the railroads, in the fields, in the mines and plants is assurance of a glorious future for our movement. We set out to unite in a working harmony the American revolutionary tradition with the revolutionary goal of the advancing forces of humanity, the revolutionary movement for complete and triumphant workers' democracy.

Read

LABOR ACTION

Official Organ of the

PROVISIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

of

THE AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

Published the 1st and 15th of Each Month

by

**THE CONFERENCE FOR PROGRESSIVE
LABOR ACTION**

112 East 19th Street, New York City

Rates:

Per Year, Domestic, \$1.

Foreign, \$1.50

Single Copy, 5 cents